

Chapter 5 *Physical Activity*

Module 3: Physical Activity in School



Step Up and Out to build physical activity excellence in school

According to the National Center for Education Statistics 46.5 million elementary and secondary students attend public schools everyday.



The school's role in physical activity



Consider how the school can play an important role in health education and promotion. Since the school environment makes up a significant part of the daily life of a child, this provides a perfect opportunity to promote physical activity and fitness education. Physical education classes are an obvious choice for much of this education and modeling.

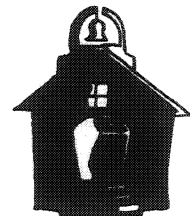
"Schools have a responsibility to give children in the community the knowledge and skills necessary for a healthy and successful life. People who are health literate and physically educated have the knowledge to effectively contribute to society, as well as maintain high levels of physical, social, and emotional health". (1)

Kansas State Department of Education, 1998

The current status of physical education in schools

Although U.S. children are more active than U.S. adults, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey showed that 48% of girls and 26% of boys do not exercise vigorously on a regular basis. (2)

The facts become even more disappointing when one recognizes that physical education classes account for less than 1 ¾ hours of physical activity per week. (3)



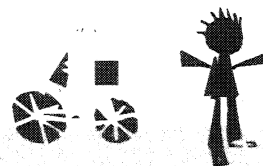
Combine this with those significant TV viewing time statistics, and physical activity is limping along!

The statistics emphasize the importance of increasing opportunities for physical activity in and outside of the school. Within the school, look for physical activity opportunities in the classroom as well as in physical education classes!

Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines

In 1997, CDC published guidelines for school and community programs (2) aimed at promoting physical activity among young people. Included in the guidelines are recommendations for daily physical education in schools and suggestions on how to develop effective programs that modify the focus from competitive sports toward emphasizing an active lifestyle through enjoyable participation in physical activity. A copy of these guidelines can be downloaded at the website listed under resources and references.

Changes in physical education practices



Increased movement and teaching physical activity skills are the name of the game! But we are still not up to par! Despite the promise of positive healthy benefits, there are too many elementary physical education classes in which children are just running laps around the gym or standing on a playing field waiting their turn to throw or catch a ball!



Old practices can be changed, however with a little creativity! Even traditional team sports can take a twist to increase the activity level and involvement of all students.

Examples:



Example 1: Rather than “traditional” baseball where most of the team sits while batters take turns, have the whole team run to 1st base alongside the batter when the ball is hit! To add more movement for the fielding team, have them line-up where the ball is fielded. Then have each person pass the ball over their head to the next person and run to the back of the line. Begin play again when the last person to receive the ball runs to the front of the line and shouts “play ball”.

Example 2: Rather than have students wait in line to throw basketball free-throws, have students maneuver an “obstacle course” around the gym after taking their throws.

Example 3: Rather than play an elimination game like Tag, when “tagged” have the student complete a physical activity (like stretching) and then return to the game.



Physical education curriculum

There is a huge “playing field” to increase opportunities for physical activity. Creating a variety of opportunities and positive influences are key, but so that we know where we are headed, what are good physical activity goals for elementary school students? The Council for Physical Education for Children (COPEC) of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has developed broad guidelines that include (4):

- ♥ Elementary school aged children should accumulate at least 30-60 minutes of age and developmentally appropriate physical activity from a variety of physical activities on all, or most days of the week.
- ♥ An accumulation of more than 60 minutes, and up to several hours per day of age and developmentally appropriate activity is encouraged.
- ♥ Some of the child’s activity each day should be in periods lasting 10-15 minutes or more and include moderate to vigorous activity.
- ♥ Extended periods of physical inactivity are inappropriate for children.
- ♥ A variety of physical activities is recommended.

The school is a very important zone in the playing field!



Physical education classes

A quality physical education program can be the starting point for building a solid foundation for lifelong activity. A good curriculum provides a balance of activities that:

- ♥ Teach motor skills and knowledge
- ♥ Allow for development of personal social skills
- ♥ Foster a positive attitude about physical activity

The Council on Physical Education for Children (COPEC) (5) has published more specific guidelines for physical education curriculum which include:

- ♥ Maintain a gym class student size equal to a regular classroom for proper student- teacher ratios
- ♥ Plan a class structure that allows students to have high levels of time-on-task, approaching 80% active learning time on a regular basis
- ♥ Plan activities that are developmentally appropriate
- ♥ Develop a curriculum that includes activities that are designed to help children understand the important concepts of physical fitness and the contribution they make to a healthy lifestyle
- ♥ Include activities that emphasize self-improvement, participation, and cooperation instead of winning and losing

A “grade card” for checking your school’s practices is found at the end of this module. Use it to identify opportunities for development!

Promoting physical education classes

The importance of physical education in school may be overlooked because of some following misperceptions about physical activity (6):

Myth: Learning how to move develops naturally through maturation.



Fact: Motor skills beyond the most simple movements and basic reflexes and reactions are learned. Children may try more advanced skills, but most cannot master them without developmentally appropriate, progressive intervention.

Myth: Most children are skilled enough to engage in advanced sports, games, and dances.



Fact: As stated above, this is not true. Most children need age-appropriate versions of adult games. For example, many pre-school age children are expected to play soccer, and yet eye-foot coordination is not fully developed until age 9 or 10.

Myth: Learning basic skills does not motivate children.



Fact: Children enjoy learning what meets their needs. Teaching skills beyond the reach of a child creates boredom, frustration, and restless behavior. Teaching kids the basics they need to develop confidence and competence will increase participation. Children who feel competent and confident behave better too!

Movement in the classroom

The benefits of movement extend outside of physical education class! In the book **Teaching Through Physical Education** (7), the authors emphasize the significant role physical activity plays in learning! They note movement:

1. Promotes active involvement in learning (versus passive learning) that leads to increased understanding.
2. Is a natural medium for young children to learn. Movement activities motivate children and capture their interest.
3. Stimulates development of the motor and neurological systems.
4. Can be experienced as a means of expression and communication.
5. Is a vital avenue by which children explore and develop an understanding of their world.

Teaching children how to move, through the use of developmentally appropriate tasks, fosters development of self-esteem and competence. It also enhances a child's use of leisure time.



“Movement is the door to learning...Movement awakens and activates many of our mental capacities...Learning involves the building of skills, and skills of every manner are built through the movement of muscles—not just the physical skills of athletes, dancers and artisans, but also the intellectual skills used in classrooms and workplaces.” (8)

“Physical educators must collaborate with classroom teachers to increase opportunities for children to move throughout the school day. Movement activities must be encouraged in the classroom to reinforce core subject matter as well as to challenge children to become skillful movers. Classroom teachers should use simple movements to stimulate thinking, create healthy minds, and develop healthy bodies. Physical educators must reinforce the classroom core curriculum with movement as a tool and the gymnasium as the classroom.” (9)

Recess

Recess provides opportunities for physical activity, which helps students stay alert and attentive in class. Denying participation in recess as a form of discipline or canceling it for instructional makeup time limits opportunities for movement. (10)

Recess is a child's "break" from "work." Kids need "playtime" for healthy development...a time to be *kids*. The goal is to have plenty of opportunities for supervised, active play by providing safe playgrounds, free play areas, and a variety of equipment. Adults can suggest to inactive students how they might increase activity, but let the student make the choice!

Step Up and Step Out recommendations

Consider the following actions to integrate increased physical activity into the school and community:



- ♥ Offer students both competitive and non-competitive activities
- ♥ Create physical activities across the curriculum on a daily basis
- ♥ Promote personal physical activity and fitness assessments as teaching tools
- ♥ Promote personal goal setting and self-monitoring tools for students, teachers, and community members
- ♥ Create physical activity options outside of the school day
- ♥ Encourage and empower the Youth Advisory Council to develop/direct physical activity programs
- ♥ Promote and model physical activity "activism" (getting involved)
- ♥ Market and model (M-and-M's) training sessions for coaches and volunteers in development programs for youth
- ♥ Customize objectives and programs to incorporate local resources, talents, and personalities
- ♥ Reach as many different socioeconomic, ethnic, and interested participants as possible to maximize opportunities and activities
- ♥ Plan lessons that teach skills children will use while participating in recreational and leisure activities throughout life



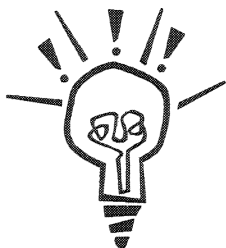


References and Resources

- (1) Physical Education Curriculum Guide, the Kansas State Department of Education, June 1998. Written by Chandler, Judy; DiLislio, Michelle; Dryer, Dan; Ermler, Kathy; Friesen, Ross; Greene, Leon; Harris, Bobbie; Hines, DeeDee; Mehrhof, Joella; Stockard, Jerry.
- (2) Centers for Disease Control and Health Promotion: *Guidelines for school and community health programs promote lifelong physical activity among young people*. MMWR. 1997;46:RR-6
Phone:800-458-5231
www.dh.gov/epo/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00046823.htm
- (3) "Physical Activity Message for Parents From New Survey: No More Excuses", International Life Sciences Institute, Press Release July 1, 1997a
- (4) Corbin, C., Pangrazi, R. "Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines," COPEC, NASPE Publications, Reston, VA . Phone: 703-476-3410
- (5) "Developmentally Appropriate Physical Education Practices for Children, National Association for Sport and Physical Education/ COPEC, 1992.
- (6) Physical Education Methods for Classroom Teachers, Abernethy, Bruce, 1999. Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825 1-800-747-4457.
- (7) Teaching Through Physical Education. Cone, Theresa; P., Werner, Peter; Woods, Stephen, L.; and Mays, Amelia. Human Kinetics Publishing, Inc. Champaign, IL, 1998. With additional support by Bucek, 1992; Gilbert, 1992; Friedlander, 1992; Gallahue, 1993; Connor-Kuntz and Dummer, 1996
- (8) As quoted by Paul E. Dennison in SMART MOVES Why Learning is Not All in Your Head, Hannaford, Carla, Ph.D. Great Ocean Publishers, Arlington, VA, 1995.
- (9) Jehue, D. and Carlisle, C. (2000) Movement Integration: The Key to Optimal Development. *Teaching Elementary Physical Education*, January 2000 5-8.
- (10) National Association of State Boards of Education: *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy*. The publication can be purchased from the Safe and Healthy Schools Projects, National Association of State Boards of Education, 277 S. Washington St., Suite 100, Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: 703-684-4000; Website: <http://www.nasbe.org/healthyschools/fithealthy.mgi>
- (11) Virgilio, Stephen J., 1997. Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825. Phone: 1-800-747-4457

Physical education curriculum resources/supplements to check in the resource section of this manual:

- ♥ **SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids)**
A non-profit organization of San Diego State University Foundation that has evolved from Project SPARK, a research grant funding from the Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health. SPARK provides concepts and teaching methods. Training includes organizational and management techniques, how to develop, maintain, and increase student health and physical fitness; how to improve fundamental movement and sports skills; method of class scheduling, facilities management, and equipment organization.
- ♥ **Physical Best/AAHPERD**
Physical Best is a comprehensive health-related fitness education program to be used in conjunction with existing K-12 physical education curricula. Physical Best moves beyond traditional programs by raising children's awareness of physical fitness, the connection between physical activity, and health-related fitness, and by making physical activity health-related and non-competitive.
- ♥ **FITNESSGRAM**
FitnessGram is a test and computer software program designed to evaluate and educate students about their current level of health-related fitness. Unique to the health and education fields is the FitnessGram concept of recognition and motivation. The goal is to recognize students who are physically active and who achieve the Healthy Fitness Zone. The program also includes an "ActivityGram."
- ♥ **The Activity Pyramid**
Like USDA's Food Guide Pyramid, the Activity Pyramid illustrates a "balanced diet" of weekly physical activity and various forms of "traditional" exercise. The activity pyramid helps individuals find ways to add activity to their days and develop lifelong personal habits.
- ♥ **Physical Essentials (Available Spring/Summer 2001)**
An elementary school curriculum designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a physically healthy lifestyle.
- ♥ **Physical Focus**
A middle school curriculum designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a physically healthy lifestyle.
- ♥ **Physical Dimensions**
A high school curriculum designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a physically healthy lifestyle.

**Module Tip:**

The school is a site for physical activity opportunities. The opportunities provide the potential for healthy benefits as well as enhanced learning.

FAQs:

- ❑ **Question:** Is fitness testing an important part of the PE curriculum? How should students be graded?
Answer: Ongoing fitness assessment is used as part of the continuous process of helping children understand, enjoy, improve, and/or maintain wellness. Test results are shared privately with students and their parents as a tool for development. It is recommended that grading practices reflect evaluation of student progress toward learning goals, as well as achievement of those goals.
- ❑ **Question:** Does the size of a PE class really matter more than the size of a regular classroom?
Answer: It is suggested classes do not exceed 30 students per period, per teacher, and per assigned space. Just as in the classroom, it is not possible to teach all the skills and concepts specified in a curriculum and allow enough time and attention for children to question, integrate, analyze, communicate, and apply the concepts.
- ❑ **Question:** How do you plan to make physical education less competitive?
Answer: Emphasize cooperation, socialization, and active lifetime fitness skills rather than just competition and team sports.

Module Glossary:

Active learning time: The time spent moving during any period of learning.

Healthy lifestyle: Patterns of living that include healthy eating, physical activity, and appropriate rest which lead to both physical and emotional wellness.

Self-efficacy: Confidence in ability to do something.



School Physical Activity Grade Card (1)

Use the following checklist to evaluate your school day opportunities.

Yes	No	
___	___	Is physical education offered for at least 150 minutes per week to all elementary students?
___	___	Does a qualified physical educator teach all of the PE classes?
___	___	Does the PE curriculum have actions based on goals and objectives?
___	___	Are the selected activities designed and utilized to maximize learning and participation?
___	___	Do classes emphasize encouragement, support, and socialization?
___	___	Do classes accommodate all students including those with disabilities?
___	___	Do classes contain numbers of students similar to academic areas?
___	___	Are there adequate facilities and equipment to provide a safe environment?
___	___	Does the program emphasize cooperation, socialization, and lifetime fitness skills at least equally with competition and traditional team sports?
___	___	Is there school-wide agreement that physical activity shouldn't be used as punishment?
___	___	Does the school administration actively support the program?

*Adapted from the Kansas State Department of Education Physical Education Curriculum Guide



Identify Mixed Messages in Your School (11)

Frequent practices that send mixed messages about physical activity (or healthy eating) in school are listed below.

1. List instances where these messages are occurring in your school.
2. Use an Environmental Change Plan to develop actions that will send a positive message.

Teachers take away physical activity time for misbehavior or use activity as punishment.

Students miss physical education class because they are finishing classroom assignments or making up missed or over due work.

Administrators and teachers regard physical education time as a chance to provide classroom teachers with a planning period.

Physical education is a part-time subject, meeting only two or three times a week in the elementary school.

Students are frequently rewarded with candy, pop, and other treats that provide empty calories.

Students have limited equipment and facilities to utilize during recess or physical education.

(11) Adapted from Fitness Education for Children